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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E
USAID AF/R/EA

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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA'S PEACE, RECOVERY, AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN
TAKES ONE GIANT STEP FORWARD

¶1. Summary: The Government of Uganda (GOU) recently released the first tranche of funding for its three-year, USD 600 million Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan (PRDP). GOU commitment to live up to its PRDP promises is a recurring concern for the USG, other donors, development partners, and most of all, for northern Ugandans themselves. The disbursement of the first GOU funds for the PRDP should help allay some of these concerns. Serious challenges remain, however, as it is ultimately up to the GOU to ensure that this recovery plan succeeds where other recovery efforts for northern Uganda have failed. End Summary.

PRDP Background, Budget, and Timeline

¶2. The PRDP is a planning framework intended to strengthen the coordination of post-conflict recovery and development efforts in northern Uganda. The plan will ultimately involve 40 districts throughout northern and northeastern Uganda, or roughly half of the districts in the country. The GOU is committed to funding 30 percent of the PRDP's total USD 600 million budget. Donor partners will fund the remaining 70 percent. USAID provided approximately USD 138 million in FY2008 and USD 112 million in FY2009 in support of PRDP goals and activities.

¶3. GOU contributions will focus on health, water, education, and roads. District level governments will manage 80% of central-level GOU funds. The remaining 20% will be centrally managed by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). Individual districts submitted PRDP work and procurement plans in June 2009. Although there has been some delay in allocating central GOU funds to the PRDP districts, Gulu District received its first quarterly tranche of PRDP funding in mid-September, making it the first official recipient of PRDP funds. Gulu is slated to receive approximately USD 2.3 million in PRDP funds for 2009.

PRDP Implementation: Show Us the Money

¶4. GOU delays in disbursing PRDP funds contributed to suspicions over GOU commitment and intentions. Some feared the PRDP was a government ploy to get donors to fund reconstruction efforts in northern Uganda, or a political ploy to bolster President Yoweri Museveni's 2011 presidential re-election bid. The allocation of approximately USD 650,000 in PRDP funds to Gulu District in northern Uganda has allayed many of these concerns, as northern Ugandans and development partners are now cautiously optimistic about the GOU's commitment to make good on PRDP promises to fund reconstruction of the north.

PRDP Challenge #1: Funding Transparency

¶15. While the disbursement of funds to Gulu is good news, serious challenges remain. One of these challenges is funding. Because PRDP money comes from a myriad of different donors and budgetary sources, the funds themselves are difficult to track. There is also confusion over the actual contributions of individual donors. The USG and other donors currently disclose their PRDP funding contributions to the Ministry of Finance. However, this information rarely trickles down to relevant district and local level stakeholders responsible for drafting local PRDP development plans.

¶16. To minimize confusion and avoid overlap, donor partners are working with the OPM and the Ministry of Finance to consolidate and analyze funding data, integrate PRDP activities, and ensure that local stakeholders are aware of the amounts and sources of PRDP funding affecting their constituencies.

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Challenge #2: Donor Coordination and Transition
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¶17. The GOU is also struggling to coordinate a dizzying array of intra-governmental stakeholders (i.e. local, district, and national level government entities), bilateral and multilateral donors, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The GOU is also struggling to define the specific roles and responsibilities of NGOs involved in PRDP implementation. After providing emergency relief services for nearly two decades, many humanitarian actors have been slow to replace these programs with the transitional development services suitable for post-conflict zones like northern Uganda.

¶18. Complicating matters further is the traditional reluctance of many of the NGOs on the ground in northern Uganda to share

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information on their planned activities and budgets with the GOU. NGOs are sometimes hesitant to disclose this information for fear that doing so could result in political pressure or increased corruption.

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Challenge #3: Trust
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¶19. Accountability, both real and perceived, poses another major hurdle for the PRDP, as many Ugandans believe PRDP money will be mismanaged by corrupt government officials. To address these valid concerns, the GOU must monitor, evaluate, and fully report PRDP progress to ensure accountability for PRDP funds and demonstrate transparency among stakeholders. The GOU plans to monitor program progress and sustainability through a variety of oversight committees and working groups. These groups then report to a higher-level PRDP Monitoring Committee (PMC), which serves as the ultimate oversight authority for PRDP resources.

¶10. The PMC is chaired by the Prime Minister. Members include relevant Chiefs of Foreign Missions, UN agency heads, host government Ministers, NGO representatives, Members of Parliament and Local Chairpersons from districts receiving PRDP funds. The PMC is charged with enforcing accountability for PRDP resources by monitoring progress and service delivery to local communities. The PMC convened for the first time on June 29 in Kampala to discuss current progress, ongoing challenges to PRDP implementation, and ways forward.

¶11. During the PMC meeting, the UN's Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Theophane Nikyema commended the GOU for its success building peace and security in northern Uganda. Nikyema highlighted the GOU's successful resettlement of internally displaced persons, noting that 77% of these are no longer in IDP camps. He emphasized the need to coordinate among stakeholders and be transparent; engage NGOs, civil society, and private sector partners in PRDP implementation; and recognize the special needs of Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda.

¶12. The Prime Minister's Office then outlined next steps for the PMC, which include analyzing development partner contributions,

finalizing an operational plan, and hashing out a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for district resource management. The PMC's next meeting is scheduled for December 2009.

In Northern Uganda, Skepticism Remains

¶13. Several Parliamentarians from northern Uganda expressed skepticism during a July 2009 PRDP stakeholder's workshop hosted by the Greater North Parliamentary Forum (GNPF) and USAID's LINKAGES project. The GNPF and USAID organized the workshop to exchange information and present different stakeholder perspectives on PRDP implementation. Many speakers praised the PRDP's progress since its 2007 inception and expressed optimism for the PRDP's future potential. However, they also acknowledged the challenges to PRDP implementation and recognized that the PRDP still has a long way to go. Discussions focused generally on the need for vertical and horizontal coordination, donor transparency, local and district leadership, community ownership of PRDP projects, oversight and accountability, and gender mainstreaming.

¶14. Concern over the direction and transparency of the PRDP is also evident within civil society. The USAID supported "A Stake in Our Future" (ASIOF) project - which aims to strengthen both GOU capacity to deliver peacebuilding projects in northern communities and local community capacity to hold the government accountable for these projects - presented a report on the status of PRDP implementation at a June 26 PRDP National Sharing Event to engage civil society members in the PRDP discussion. The most commonly reported challenges to PRDP implementation included lack of sufficient knowledge of the PRDP in local communities; fear of corruption among government officials; generally negative attitudes toward the government; fear of future war if and when rebels return to northern Uganda; inadequate staffing at the district and sub-district level to implement PRDP; poor leadership of district officials; ongoing land disputes among returning IDPs; and difficulties in coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors.

¶15. The ASIOF report concluded that PRDP implementation is being hampered by insufficient funding and widespread confusion across sectors. The report recommended greater information sharing, increased legislative oversight, improved local government and central government accountability, greater strategic planning among civil society organizations, and more local participation in

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governance efforts and PRDP implementation. The report warned that unless commitment to and attitudes toward PRDP implementation improve, the PRDP risks following in the footsteps of other failed northern Uganda recovery efforts.

IDPs and the PRDP: More Challenges

¶16. In July, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Walter Kalin noted significant progress in recovery efforts and the resettlement of IDP populations in northern Uganda. He commended PRDP efforts to date, but cautioned the GOU against placing too much emphasis on "hardware" (buildings and infrastructure) and too little emphasis on "software" (staff, accommodations, supplies, and maintenance of these facilities). He highlighted food security and donor coordination as ongoing challenges to recovery efforts in the north.

¶17. Moving forward, Kalin suggested improving coordination between district and national governments, providing greater UN and NGO support for District Development Plans (DDPs), and focusing on extremely vulnerable individuals and long-term impact in the recovery process. Most participants agreed that the PRDP is making slow but steady progress, and that the PRDP has a long way to go to achieve long-term development and recovery in northern Uganda.

¶18. GOU commitment to the reconstruction of northern Uganda remains a serious concern for the USG and other donors. GOU recognition of the need to take increased measures to improve PRDP accountability, management, and coordination at all levels through the PRDP Monitoring Committee is a good sign. More needs to be done, however, to ensure that the PRDP does not go the way of other, failed attempts to rehabilitate northern Uganda. Perhaps the most important step toward increasing chances for success is GOU ownership and responsibility for the PRDP, which is ultimately a Ugandan government plan. A demonstration of ownership for the PRDP would ease lingering doubts within partner nations. More importantly, it would allay continued skepticism among the local government officials and citizen beneficiaries on the ground in northern Uganda. The recent disbursement of Ugandan government PRDP funds to Gulu District marks an important first step in this process.

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